Alleys in the Central Corridor Frequently Asked Questions for TN Zoning Study (January 14, 2011)

Why would we want to change how alleys function near the Central Corridor?

The main reasons alleys are being discussed in the CC area are the loss of 85% of on-street parking on University Avenue and the potential for redevelopment of parcels along University Avenue as a result of light rail transit. The loss of on-street parking means that property and business owners need ways to increase access to off-street parking without increasing curb cuts on University, and alleys and side streets provide a convenient solution. Alleys are also an important element of redevelopment projects, since new developments along University will need to address a unique set of access issues.

Where did the idea of expanding the use of alleys come from?

Alleys were discussed as a way to reduce curb-cuts along University Avenue and access off-street parking in the *Central Corridor Development Strategy* (CCDS), which was adopted in October 2007.

Saint Paul may wish to introduce policies through its station area plans and Zoning Ordinance that restrict the amount of surface parking and number of curb cuts along the Corridor in favor of parking access via side streets and shared alleys. This will help to create a continuous street frontage, minimize conflict between pedestrians and cars, and maximize convenient on-street parking to support local businesses. (p. 88)

The CCDS's six Development Types (section 3.3) includes discussion of alleys in distinct development scenarios, including in the case where the alley separates residential and commercial uses and should be used for access to parking and servicing: "Preserve and extend existing alleys ... as important access routes for parking and servicing. Where alleys are shared by residential uses, minimize disruption for those uses" (p. 51).

The "Moving Forward" chapter of the set of seven Central Corridors station area plans adopted in October 2008 contains similar recommendations on alleys (p. 17) and begins to discuss how alley improvements might be funded (p. 18).

How are alleys addressed in current planning work?

In the "Mitigating the Loss of Parking in the Central Corridor" staff report (April 2009) and Central Corridor Parking Policy Recommendations (November 2010 draft), alleys are seen as a key element in creating parking solutions. The policy recommendations include implementation steps for Corridorwide parking solutions related to alleys, like improving the residential-commercial alleys by:

- exploring ways to improve ongoing maintenance and cleanup of both sides of the alleys in the Central Corridor,
- centralizing and sharing refuse and recycling services, and
- directing Public Works to maximize width when repaving alleys.

The TN zoning text amendments propose setbacks from alley centerlines for new commercial developments, to help ensure that alleys have enough room for delivery vehicles, passing, and backing

out of parking spaces. Additionally, the amendments will further explore additional design requirements for the alley interface for new commercial developments across from residential uses to ensure appropriate buffering/screening along shared alleys.

The draft Hamline, Victoria, and Western Station Area Plans recommend **improving the condition**, **maintenance**, **and character of alleys** in all three station areas through enhanced paving, pedestrian lighting, integrated stormwater management features, rear business entrances, and public art. The Western Station Area Plan additionally recommends **reestablishing partially vacated alleys** (particularly between Arundel and Mackubin) and, over time, **establishing shared circulation routes** to the rear of the blocks that currently lack alleys by reconfiguring driveways and parking lots (on the north side of University, between Galtier and Western).

What are the potential benefits of shared-use alleys?

- Fewer conflicts with pedestrians along University Avenue due to the need for fewer curb cuts
- Opportunity to better coordinate services, like trash pick up, snow plowing, etc.
- Possibility of grant-funded alley improvements to benefit all users
- More users and eyes on the alley to improve safety and maintenance
- Potential to share costs of lighting and recycling services

What are the potential drawbacks of shared-use alleys?

- Increased traffic
- Potential for conflict between residential and commercial users, who may have different expectations, needs, hours, etc.

What does City Code say about alleys?

Alleys are public right-of-way and shall not be obstructed or built upon (Section 106.01). Alley construction and reconstruction costs are 100% assessed to the benefitting owners (Chapter A-8 – Special Assessment Policy). Property owners along alleys that are maintained (i.e. patched, etc.) pay an alley maintenance fee set by the City Council as part of its annual budget process, after a public hearing, published notice, and mailed notice (Section 62.01). Some alleys are unpaved (gravel) and are not maintained by the City so are therefore not assessed a maintenance fee. There are gravel alleys in existence along University Avenue. The City does not plow snow in alleys. Property owners coordinate and pay for alley snow plowing on each block.

How would alley improvements be funded? Will residents have to pay for alley improvements? St. Paul PED has been awarded \$350,000 in CIB (Capital Improvement Budget) funding that would allow the City to repave up to ten blocks of alleys, \$100,000 for residential buffering in other funding to create a grant program for business owners, and fund work crews.

What might alley improvements look like?

Example from the Western Station Area Plan (pending approval)





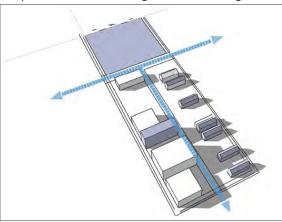




FIGURE 4.7 - Murals created by local artists such as this example along Grand Avenue (top left) can help to enhance the image of the alleys. Enhanced metal halide lighting such as in this example from Chicago (top right) creates a brighter, more natural light making it easier to see and enhancing user safety. The before and after photos of this alley in Chicago (bottom) illustrate the results of their Green Alley program and demonstrate how permeable surfaces can reduce water runoff issues while enhancing the image and character of the alley.

Design principles from the Parking Solutions Design Workshops (October 2009)

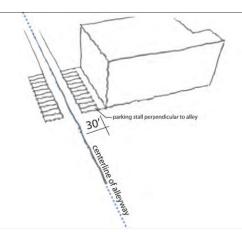
CIRCULATION



Internal Circulation

- Minimum width for new alleys= 24'
- Alleys are to be either T or L-shaped if they do not run parrallel to the length of the block
- Alleys are to be utilized for deliveries and access to the rear of buildings fronting University Avenue
- -Where possible, alleys may serve as parking lot drivelanes, reducing drive lane redundancy
- Alleys provide secondary circulation routes

LEY PARKING



Alleys: Parking

- 30' offset from alley centerline allows for perpendicular parking spaces.
- Maximize alley ways for circulation, access, and parking opportunities
- Agreements with residential properties may increase available space for parking thereby creating double loaded parking in alley way.
- Parking opportunity for employees and customers
- Opportunity to organize rear parking spaces for improved safety and visibility

LEY EDGE



Stabilize the Residential Alley Edge

- Garage Improvements
- Fence
- Lighting
- Dumpsters
- Parking Courts or parking pads